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ABSTRACT

This publication reports findings from the 1981 and 1982 Current Population Survey studies conducted by the United States Bureau of the Census regarding characteristics of the 2,280,000 noninstitutionalized disabled blacks between 16 and 64 years of age. Tables, figures, and text provide information on age distribution, educational attainment, residential patterns, marital status, labor force participation, income and economic status, and occupational categories of this population. The "typical" working-age disabled black adult is described as: 42 years of age; having a tenth-grade education; not married; not in the labor force; and had about $3,000 in income from all sources in 1980. (CB)

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BLACK ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES

A STATISTICAL REPORT DRAWN FROM CENSUS BUREAU DATA

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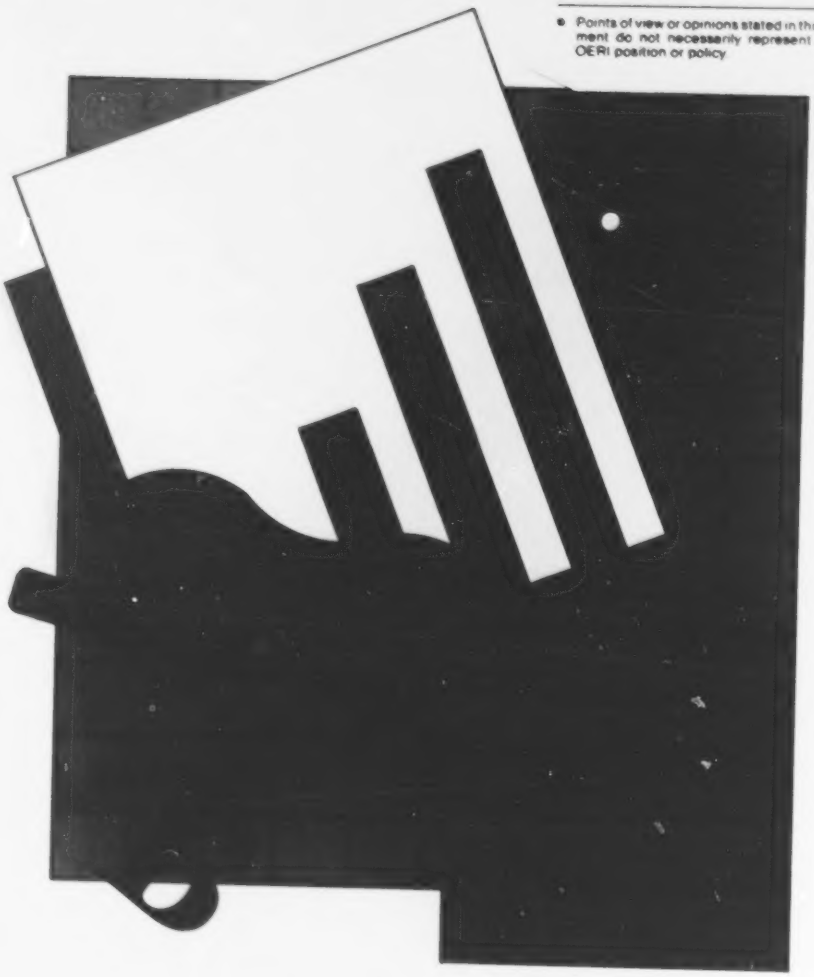

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About the Author

Frank Bowe, Ph.D., L.L.D., became interested in the associations between race and disability in 1971, when he researched and wrote one of the first protocols of study with nonwhite disabled individuals. Since then, the relatively high prevalence and incidence rates among blacks of different kinds of disabilities have spurred him to further research. In *Handicapping America* and *Rehabilitating America* (both published by Harper & Row), he explored the integration of race and disability. This book, however, represents his first full-length treatment on the subject.

Dr. Bowe resides in Lawrence, Long Island, New York with his wife Phyllis and daughters Doran and Whitney.

Author's Note

This publication reports upon findings from the 1981 and 1982 Current Population Survey studies conducted by the U. S. Bureau of the Census, U. S. Department of Commerce. Data are examined which provide us with a portrait of Americans aged 16-64 years who have a work disability but who are not institutionalized. These data are analyzed by race. For comparable information about disabled women, Hispanics with disability, and the general population of disabled adults, please see *Disabled Adults in America*, *Disabled Women in America*, and *Disabled Adults of Hispanic Origin*, the companion volumes to Black Adults with Disabilities.

The author acknowledges the assistance of John McNeil, of the consumer expenditures and health statistics branch, and of Lawrence Haber, of the population division, Bureau of the Census. Justin C. Lewis, a consultant to the President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped, also supplied valued assistance, as did Bernard Posner, executive director of the President's Committee.

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Thumbnail Sketches

The "typical" working-age black adult:

- is 31 years old
- has a high-school education
- is not married
- is in the labor force
- works full- or part-time
- had about $7,500 in income from all sources in 1980

The "typical" working-age disabled black adult:

- is 42 years of age
- has a tenth-grade education
- is not married
- is not in the labor force
- does not work full- or part-time
- had about $3,000 in income from all sources in 1980

Source: Current Population Survey, March, 1981.

Introduction

Disability is markedly more common among black adults than it is among whites or Hispanics.

Disability is markedly more common among black adults than it is among whites or Hispanics. Interest in the special problems of disabled blacks, who must confront discrimination on the basis of race as well as disability, has increased in recent years.

This document presents data which help describe the adult black population of the United States reporting one or more work disabilities. The data in this publication are subject to the same restrictions that affect figures reported in other booklets in this series, e.g., *Disabled Women in America*. Specifically, the information contained here relates only to persons of working age; that is, this report says nothing about persons under the age of 16 or over the age of 64. A second limitation is that these figures cover only individuals who are not in institutions. And data on disabled blacks concern only those black adults who report one or more disabilities.

In addition, with respect to employment patterns, care must be exercised in interpreting the data in this publication. After results of the Census Bureau's annual March Current Population Survey are broken down according to disability status, race and employment status, relatively few persons remain upon whom to base calculations. Accordingly, some of the data in this report appear as proportions rather than as absolute numbers.

The statistics offered here derive from a new and exciting series of studies: the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey March studies. The Census Bureau conducts the CPS each month, primarily to assemble employment information about the working-age population to use in reporting the current rate of unemployment in America. Each March, the CPS includes additional questions about disability. Figures from the 1981 and 1982 CPS studies are included in this publication.

Experts in the demography field regard the CPS as highly reliable and very comparable to the Census itself. The chief benefit of using CPS data rather than 1980 Census figures is that CPS information is much more rapidly available.

This report is one of a series of four. *Disabled Adults in America, Disabled Women in America, and Disabled Adults of Hispanic Origin* present related information.

Here, as in the other books in the series, *disability* refers to a health condition that prevents a person from working or restricts the amount or kind of work that a person can do. Please see *Disabled Adults in America* for a more complete discussion of the technical aspects of the Current Population Survey.

Executive Summary

One working-age black adult in every seven is disabled.

One working-age black adult in every seven is disabled. Of 16,157,000 black adults aged 16–64 and not in institutions, 2,280,000, or 14.1%, are disabled.

Most disabled black adults of working age are women. Largely because females outnumber males 8.81 million to 7.34 million in the general working-age population, 53.9% of all black disabled adults are women while 46.1% are men.

The average disabled black adult is 42 years old, has less than a high-school level of education, does not work, nor is actively seeking employment. Income from all sources was under $3,000 in 1980.

Nearly eight in ten (78%) disabled blacks reside in cities. Most live in central cities. Almost half (49%) reside in the Southern part of the country. Slightly more than one in three (31.1%) is married, while almost as many (28.7%) never married.

Almost half (47%) of all working-age disabled black adults live with incomes below the official poverty line. This is largely attributable to the fact that only one in every six (16.4%) works. The unemployment rate in March 1982 among disabled blacks of working age was 26.5%.

Size of the Population

Disability is markedly more common among blacks than among whites. About 14.1% of all blacks of working age have one or more disabilities; the rate among black males is 14.3%, that among black females, 14.0%. By contrast, only 8.4% of whites of working age have disabilities. The proportion among white males is 9.0%; that among white females, 7.8%.

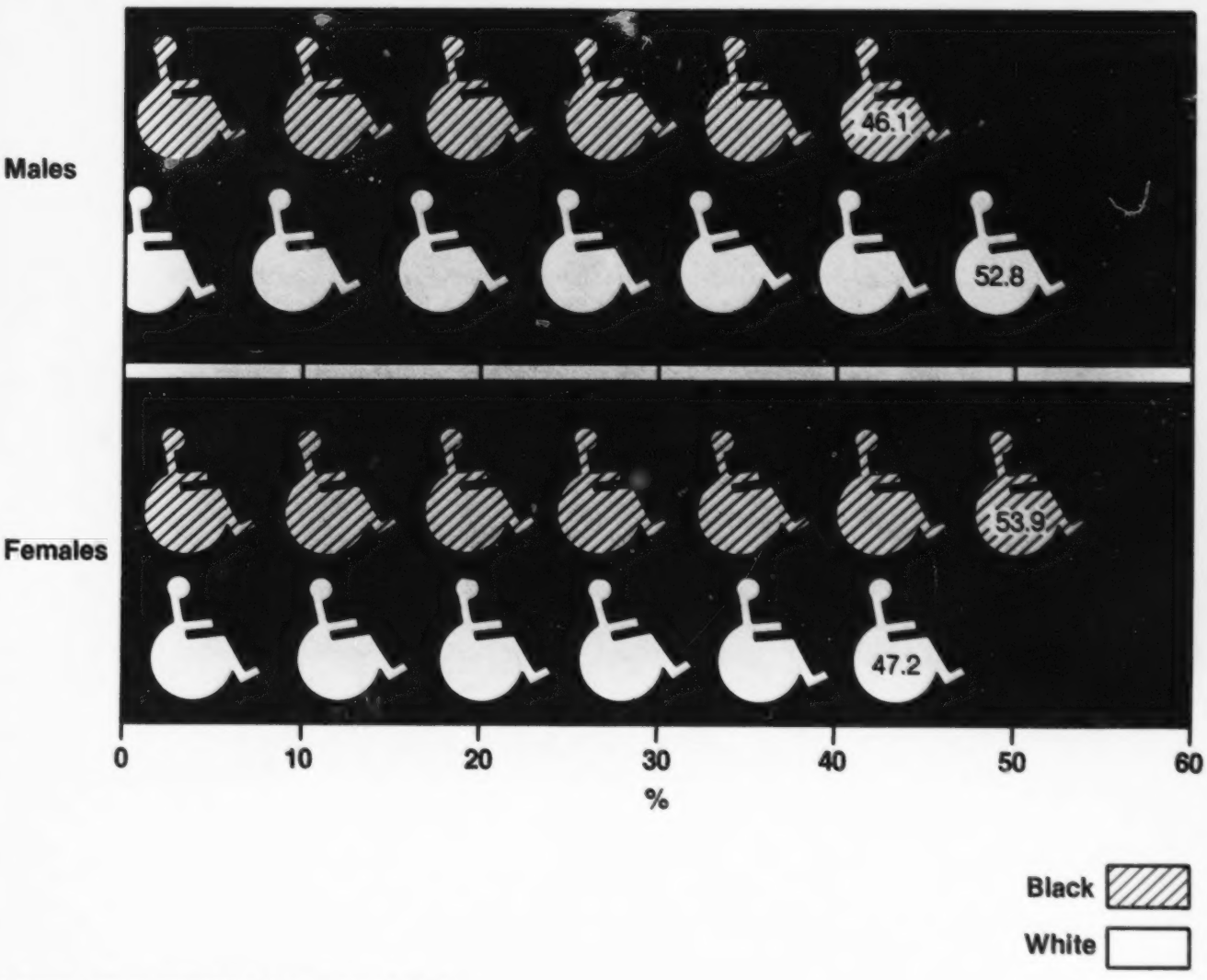
The black disabled population aged 16–64 and not in institutions numbered 2,280,000 in March 1981, according to the Current Population Survey. Fully 53.9% of these persons were women, while only 46.1% were men. The difference in prevalence rates by sex is accounted for largely by the fact that, in the general working-age black population, 54.6% are women and 45.4% are men.

Why does disability occur so much more often among blacks than among whites in the working-age population? The likely reasons are occupation and poverty status. Blacks are more likely than are whites to perform physically demanding work that may lead to disability; similarly, conditions that in whites may be corrected by medical care may among blacks persist until they become permanent disabilities.

Table 1 offers data on the adult disabled population by race and by sex.

Table 1

Disabled Adults Aged 16-64 and Not in Institutions, by Race, by Sex



Source: Current Population Survey, March 1981.

Characteristics of the Population

Age

Black disabled adults of working age are much older, on average, than are other blacks. While fully one-third of all disabled blacks aged 16–64 are between 55 and 64 years of age, only one nondisabled black in twelve is in that age range. By contrast, while one-third of all nondisabled working-age blacks are 16-24 years of age, only 11.8%, or fewer than one in eight, of disabled blacks are that young.

As compared to disabled whites of working age, the black disabled population is somewhat younger. This is a reflection of the fact that the black adult population as a whole tends to be younger than does the general white population.

The average disabled black of working age is about 42 years of age, much younger than the typical disabled white's 51 years of age, but much older than the average nondisabled black's 31 years of age.

In Table 2 appear data comparing age-range distributions by race and by disability status.

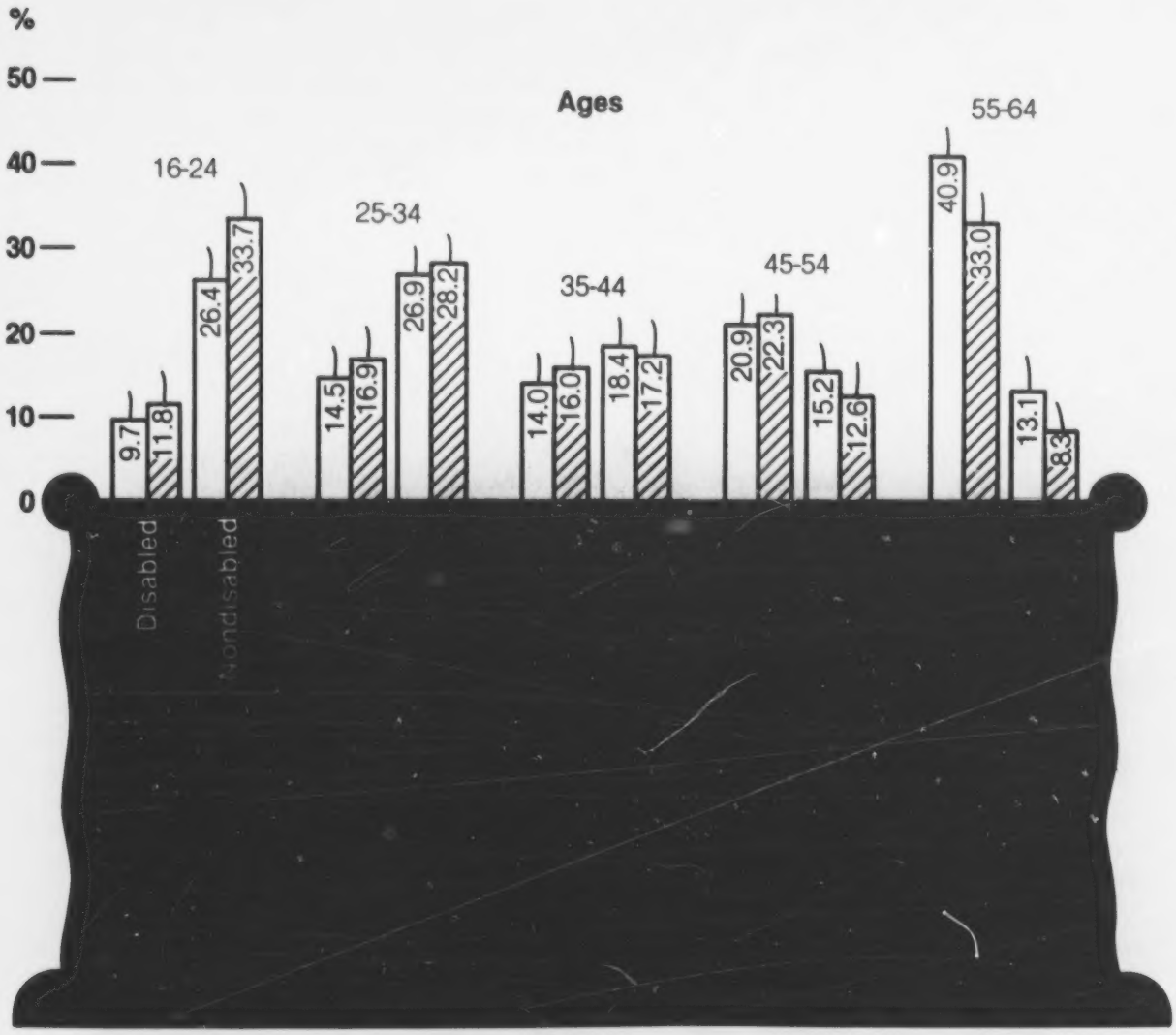
Education

Disabled black adults have lower levels of education attainment than do disabled whites. As compared to other blacks of working age, those with disabilities are less well-educated.

The average disabled black person aged 16–64 has less than a high-school level of preparation. The average disabled white of the same age range is a high-school graduate, as is the typical nondisabled black of working age.

Table 2

Age Range, by Disability Status: Black and White Persons Aged 16-64 and Not in Institutions



Source: Current Population Survey, March 1981.

Strikingly, only one disabled black of working age in every 40 is a college graduate. This is only one-third the rate among nondisabled blacks and is just 29% of the rate among disabled whites.

By contrast, one out of every four disabled blacks aged 16–64 never got an eighth-grade education. That is more than quadruple the rate among nondisabled blacks and fully 11.6% greater than the rate among disabled whites.

It may appear surprising that disabled black adults are so much less well-educated than other blacks, given that disability tends to occur in the post-schooling years. Here, as with other groups studied [e.g., males, females], it is probable that low levels of education lead to physical labor jobs and to relative poverty, both of which may in turn lead to disability. For some blacks, disability limits educational attainment, but for more blacks disability results in part from low levels of preparation.

Table 3 presents a comparison between disabled blacks, nondisabled blacks, and disabled whites with respect to years of school completed.

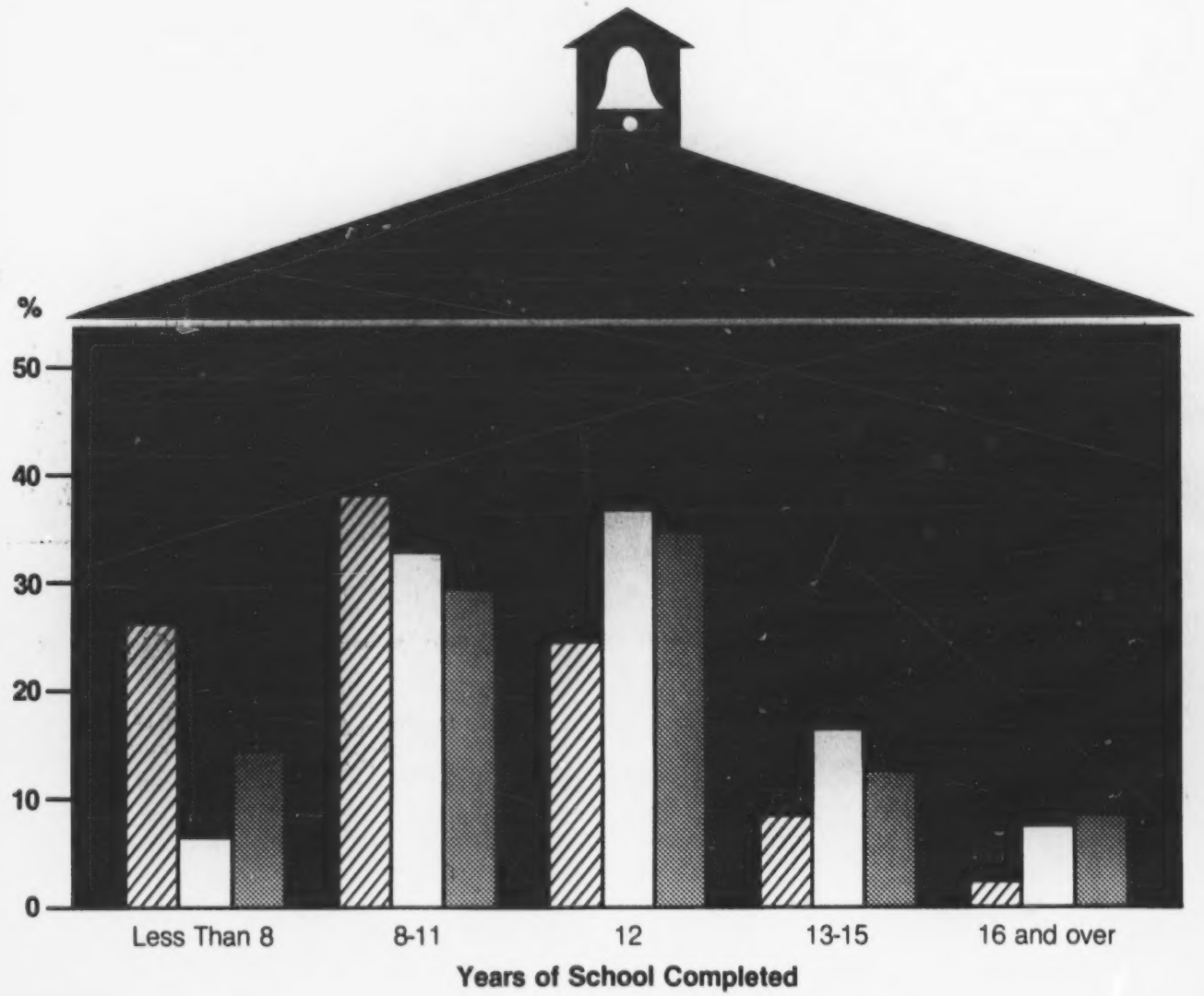
Residence

Disabled black people of working age are likely to be residents of urban "central city" locations. Fully 78% of all black adults aged 16–64 and not in institutions who report one or more disabilities reside in cities. Of those persons, eight in ten (80.0%) live in the central city area, while only 20% reside in other parts of a city. In all, 62.1% of disabled black people of working age live in central cities.

The patterns are much more similar to those of nondisabled blacks than they are to disabled whites' residential patterns, suggesting that residential patterns are more a factor of distribution by race than of that by disability.

Table 3

Years of School Completed: Disabled Blacks, Nondisabled Blacks, and Disabled Whites Aged 16-64 and Not in Institutions



Source: Current Population Survey, March 1981.

Almost half (49%) of disabled blacks of working age reside in the Southern section of the country. Fewer than one in ten live in the West. About one in every five live in the Northeast; another one in five live in the North Central region. Disabled white adults, by contrast, are more likely to live in the West and slightly more likely to live in the Northeast or North Central regions, but much less likely to live in the South. Again, geographical distribution patterns of disabled blacks are closer to those of nondisabled blacks than they are to those of disabled whites.

Table 4 offers a comparison of residential patterns among disabled blacks, nondisabled blacks, and disabled whites. In Figure 1 appears a portrait of nationwide geographical distribution patterns of these three groups.

Marital Status

Disabled blacks are less likely than are other blacks to be married. They are also less likely than are nondisabled blacks to be "never married." By contrast, those blacks of working age who report work disabilities are more likely than are other black adults to be widowed, divorced or separated.

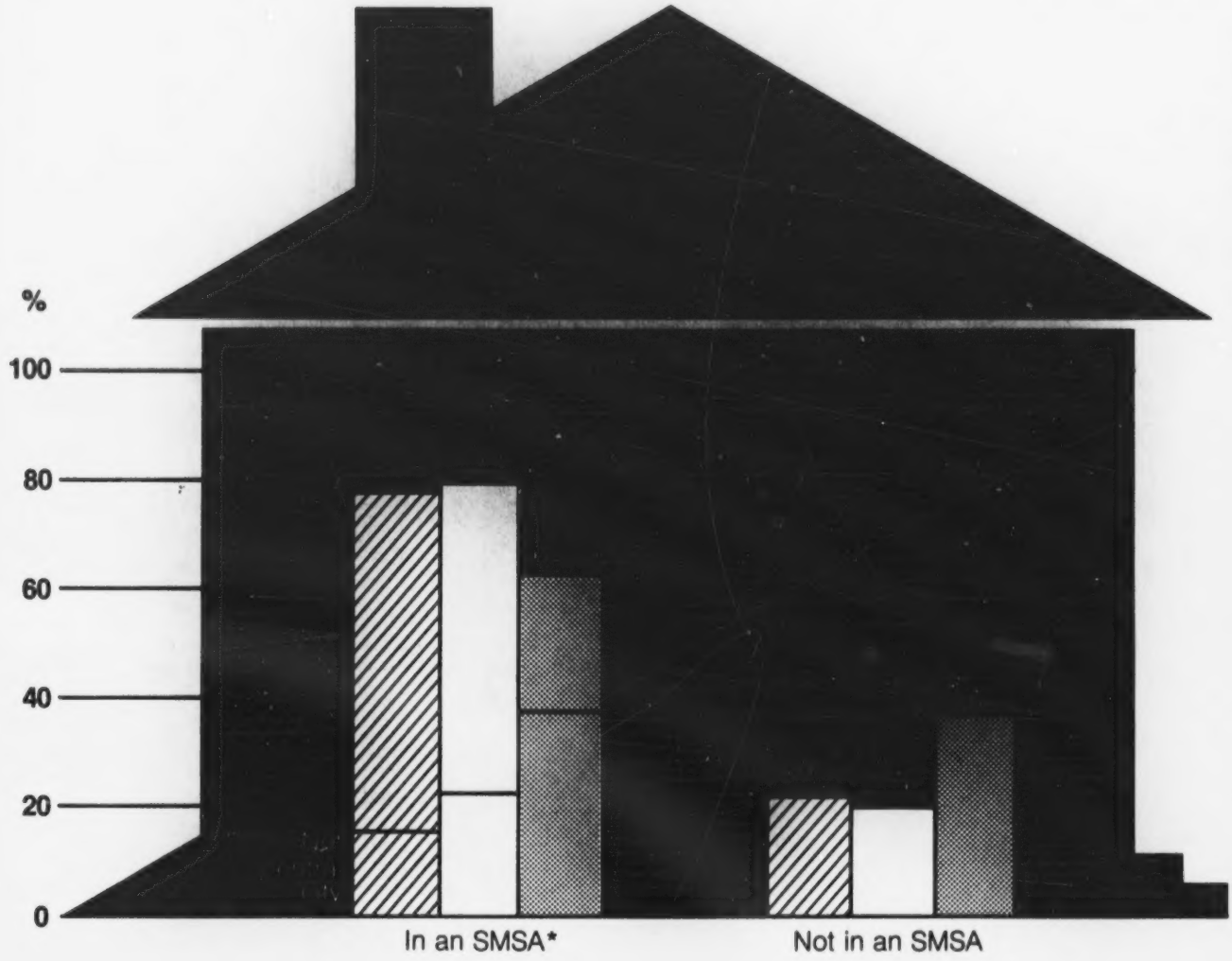
Table 5 compares disabled and nondisabled blacks by marital status.

Marital status varies markedly by sex. As Figure 2 shows, black males who report work disability are markedly more likely to be married than are disabled black women; about the same ratio holds when we compare black disabled males and females on "never married" status. But females who are black and disabled are much more likely than are males to be widowed or separated, and somewhat more likely to be divorced.

Comparison of marital status rates among disabled blacks with those rates observed among other disabled persons reveals that disabled blacks are much less likely to be married or never married but more likely to be widowed, divorced or separated. That is, blacks with disabilities tend, more than do whites, to have married at some point, only to see that marriage encounter difficulties or terminate.

Table 4

Residential Patterns: Disabled Blacks, Nondisabled Blacks, and Disabled Whites Aged 16-64 and Not in Institutions

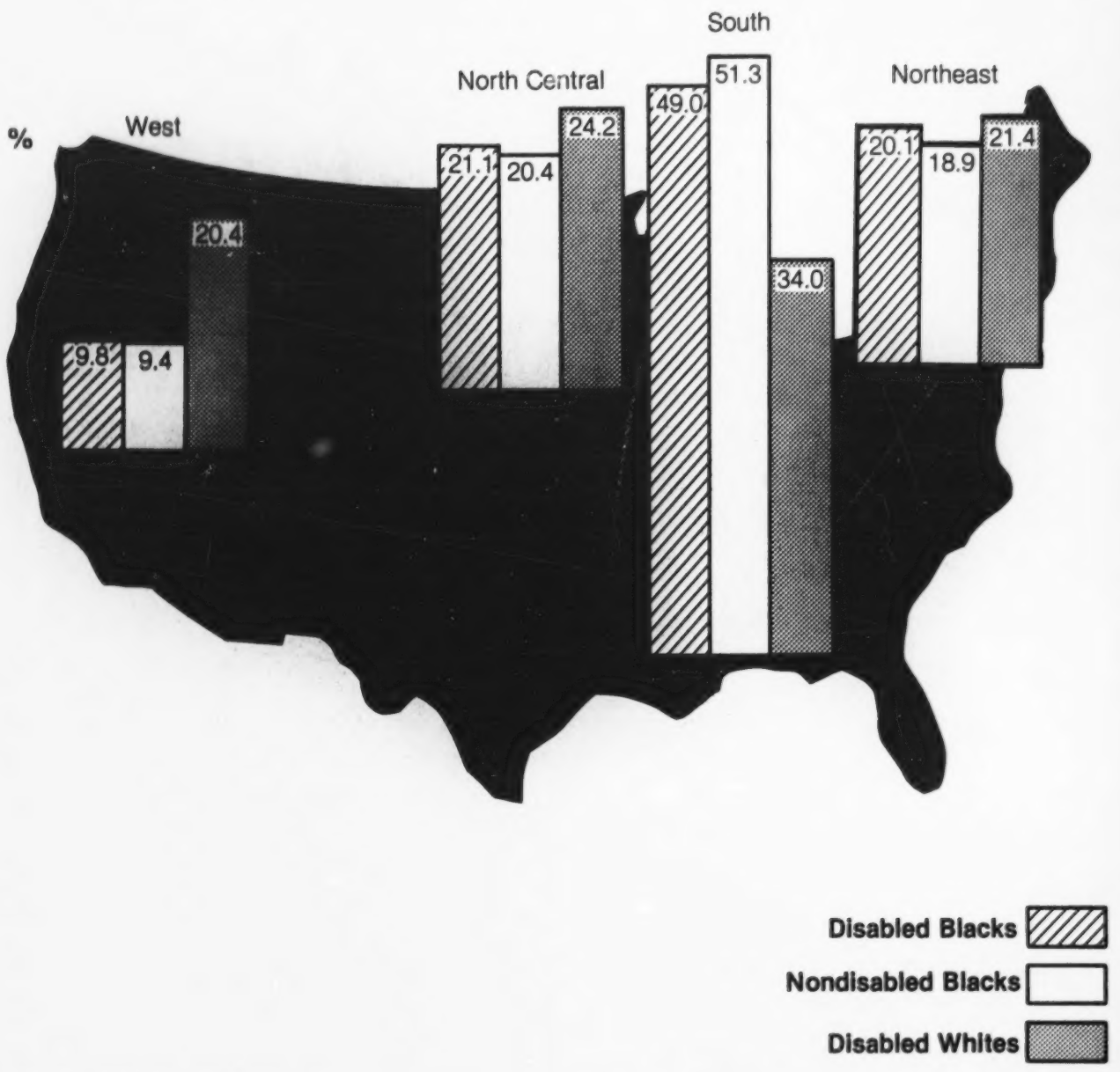


*SMSA: Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area

Source: Current Population Survey, March 1981.

Figure 1

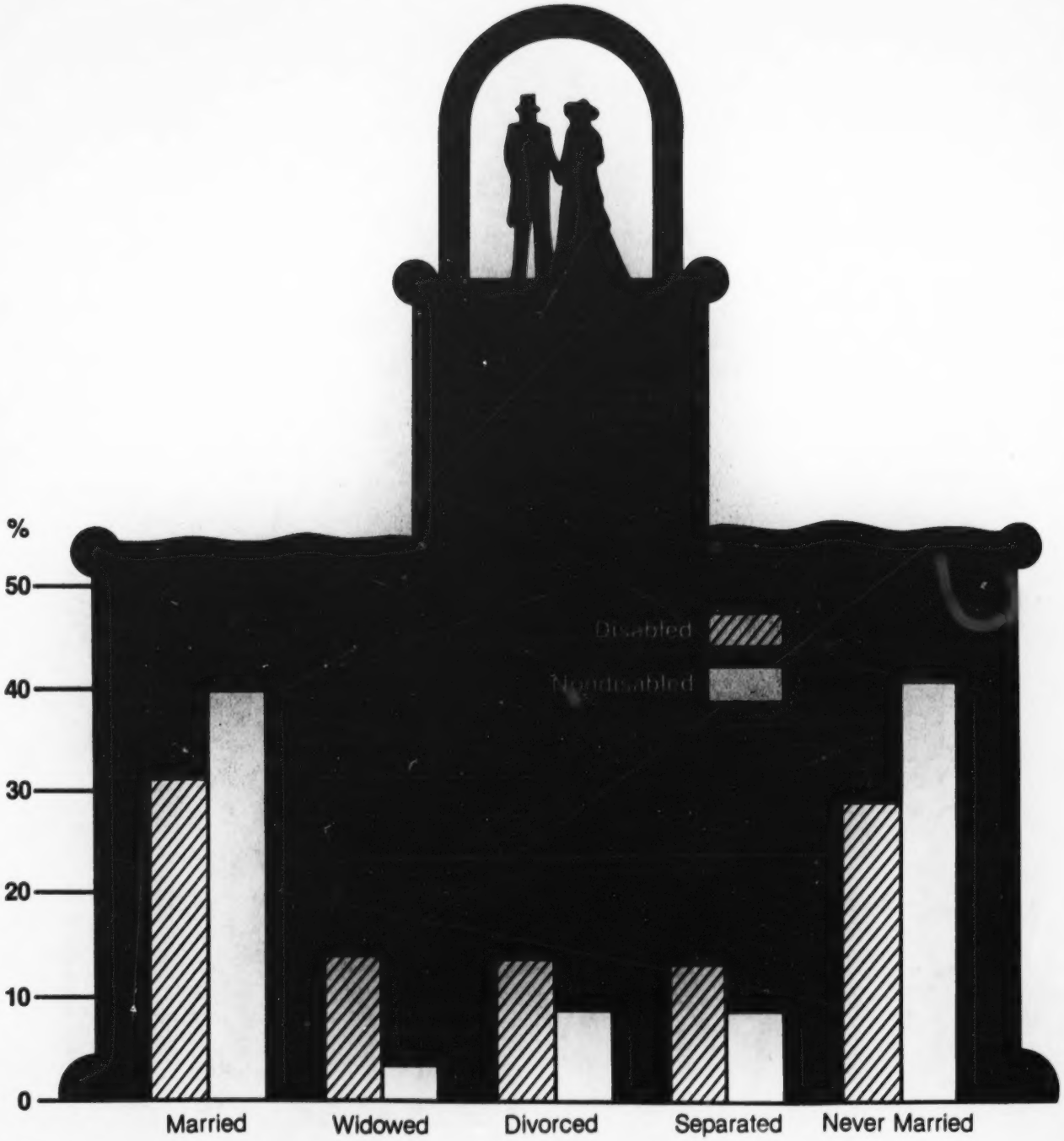
Geographical Distribution: Disabled Blacks, Nondisabled Blacks, and Disabled Whites Aged 16-64 and Not in Institutions



Source: Current Population Survey, March 1981.

Table 5

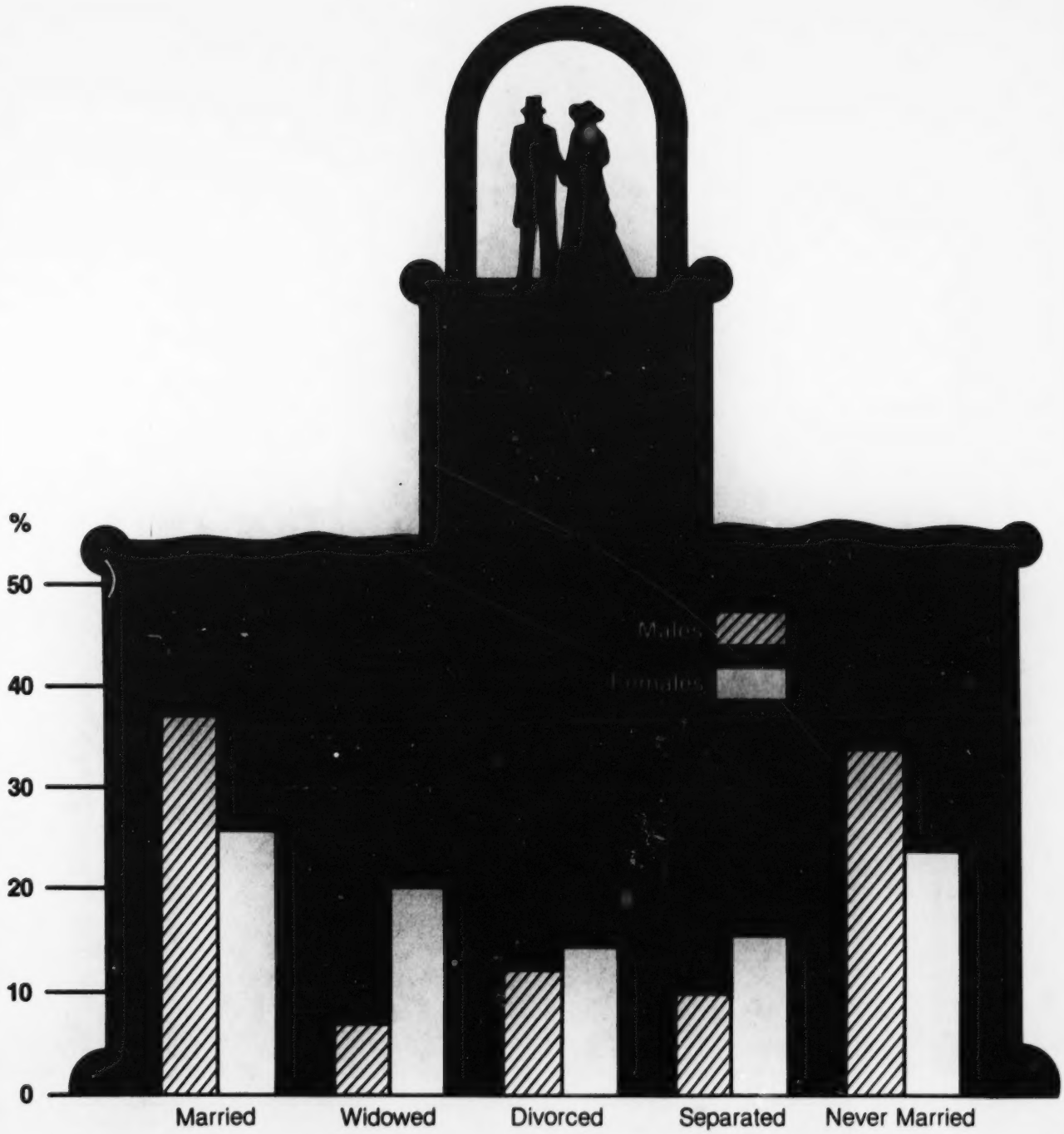
Marital Status, by Disability Status: Black Adults Aged 16-64 and Not in Institutions



Source: Current Population Survey, March 1981.

Figure 2

Marital Status, by Sex: Black Adults With Work Disability Aged 16-64 and Not in Institutions



Source: Current Population Survey, March 1981.

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Labor Force Participation

Most disabled black adults were neither working nor seeking work in March 1982 according to the Current Population Survey.

Fewer than one in every four (22.4%) is either working or seeking work. Of these people in the labor force, slightly more than one quarter (26.5%) is not working but seeking work. Almost three quarters (73.5%) found jobs. That is one of the bright spots in the study.

However, in the total black adult population, only one in six (16.4%) is employed; five in six are not.

The proportions employed of white and black segments of the working-age population of persons reporting a work disability differ: 16.4% among blacks and 26.3% among whites. As compared to black adults who are not disabled, disabled blacks are employed only 27.7% as frequently.

Figure 3 offers a comparison of proportions employed by age of black and white disabled males of working age. Overall, disabled white men are employed twice as frequently as are their black peers.

In Figure 4, proportions employed by sex and by age of black disabled working-age adults are presented.

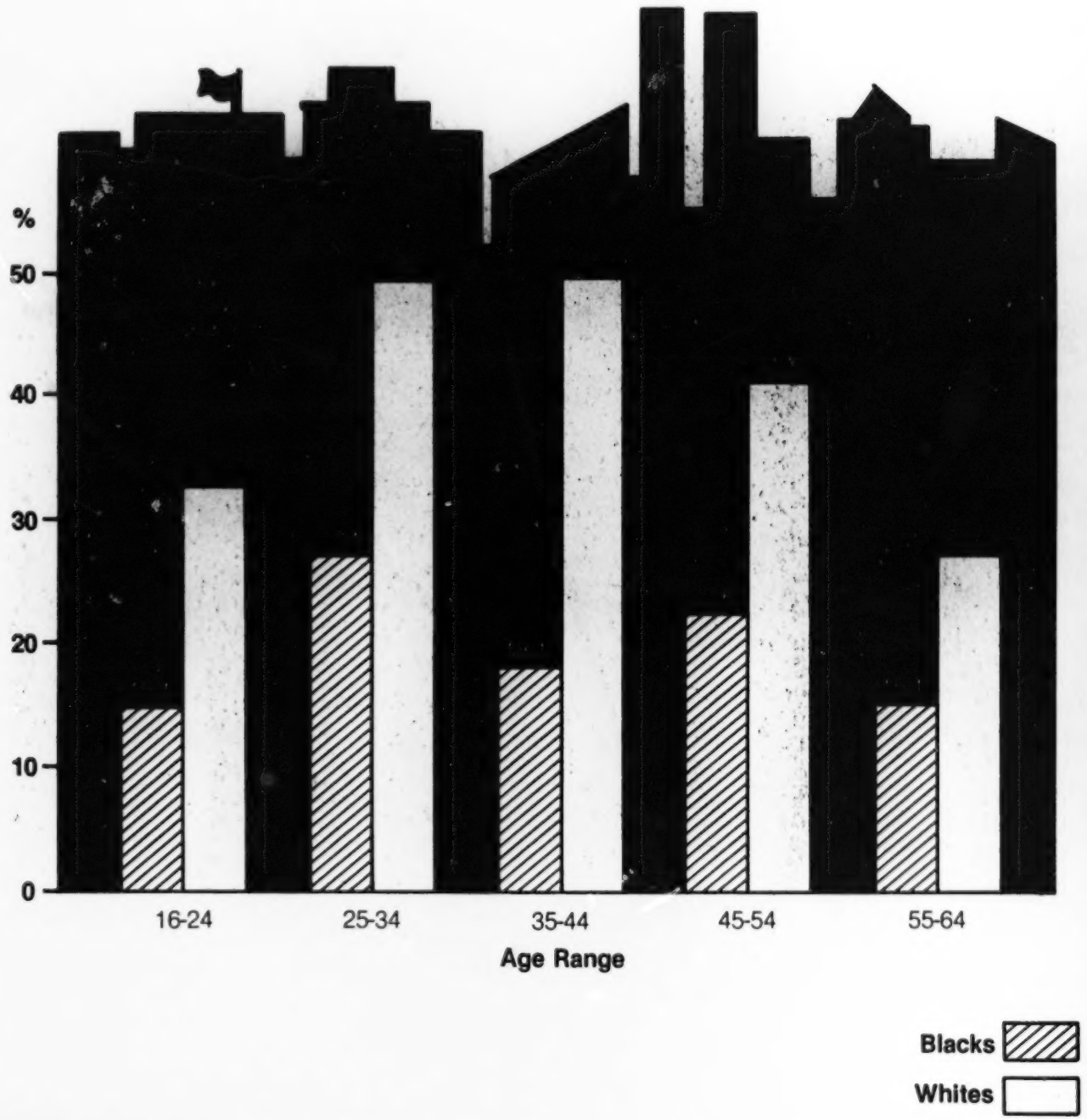
The data are offered in graphic rather than in tabular form owing to the fact that the numbers of persons in the Census Bureau sample for the March 1982 Current Population Survey were small when partitions were made by disability status, employment status and race. The resulting sample of employed disabled blacks is more helpful for seeing broad tendencies than it is for analyzing numerical data themselves.

Income and Economic Status

Disabled blacks tend to be poor. Almost one-third (32.5%) report income from all sources of less than $2,000 annually. Another third (32.3%) have incomes between $2,000 and $3,999 per year.

Figure 3

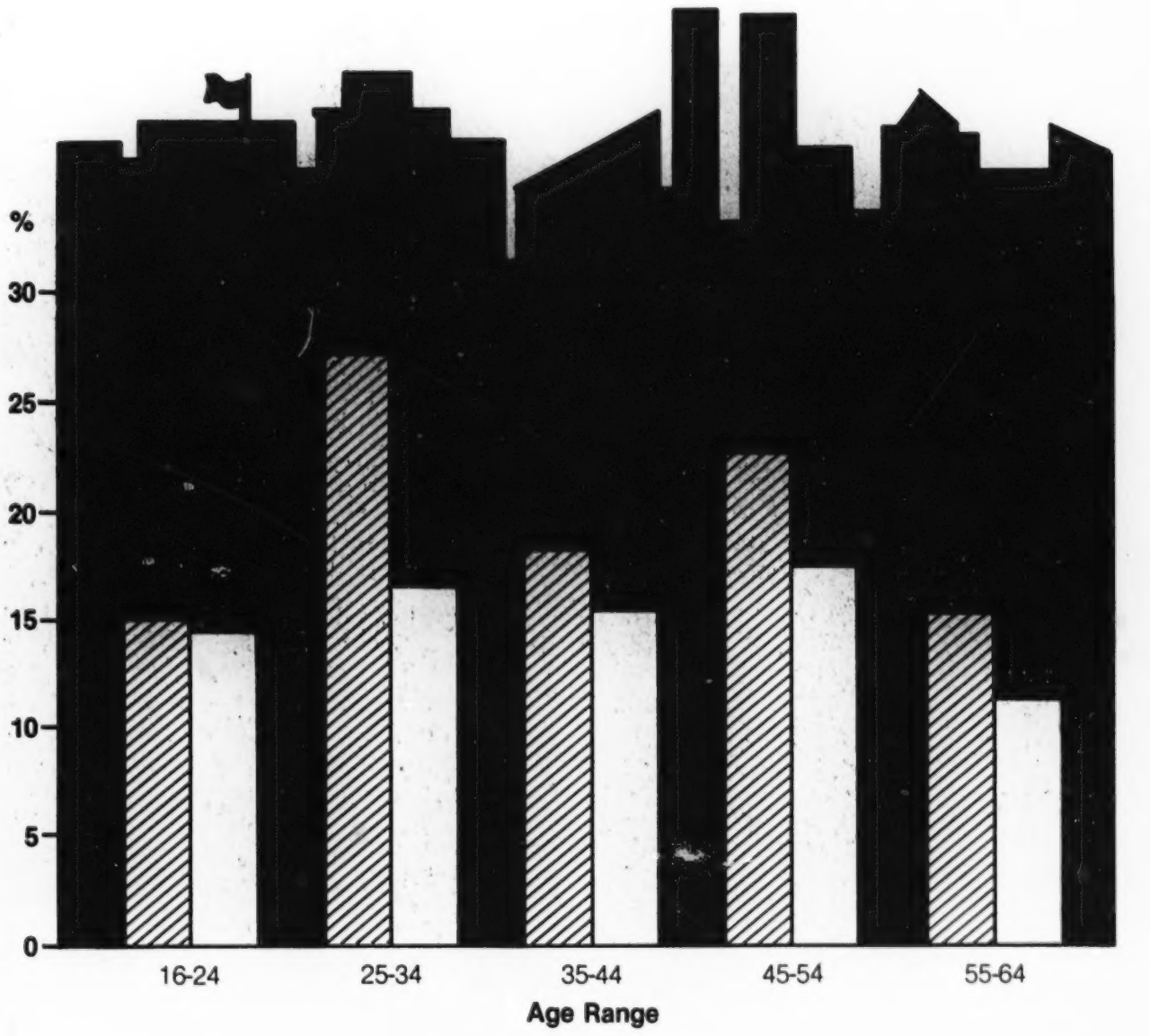
Proportions Employed, by Age Range: Black and White Disabled Males Aged 16-64 and Not in Institutions



Source: Current Population Survey, March 1982.

Figure 4

Proportions Employed, by Sex, by Age: Disabled Blacks Aged 16-64 and Not in Institutions



Source: Current Population Survey, March 1982.

Figure 5 illustrates these data.

Figure 6 compares disabled and nondisabled blacks on income relative to the poverty line. Almost half (47%) of all disabled black adults of working age have incomes from all sources which fall below the official poverty line. By contrast, nondisabled blacks are two and one-half times as likely to report earnings from all sources of three or more times the official poverty level.

The very low level of income reported by disabled blacks reflects the fact that most do not participate in the nation's labor force.

One disabled adult in four and one disabled woman in three were below the poverty level in 1980, compared to almost one disabled black in two.

Occupational Category

Disabled black adults who work tend to have the same kinds of jobs as do other blacks.

A remarkable 53.2% of all employed black women have service jobs. These are among the least stable and lowest paying jobs in business. The highest proportions of disabled black men who work are found in operative, craft, service and laborer positions.

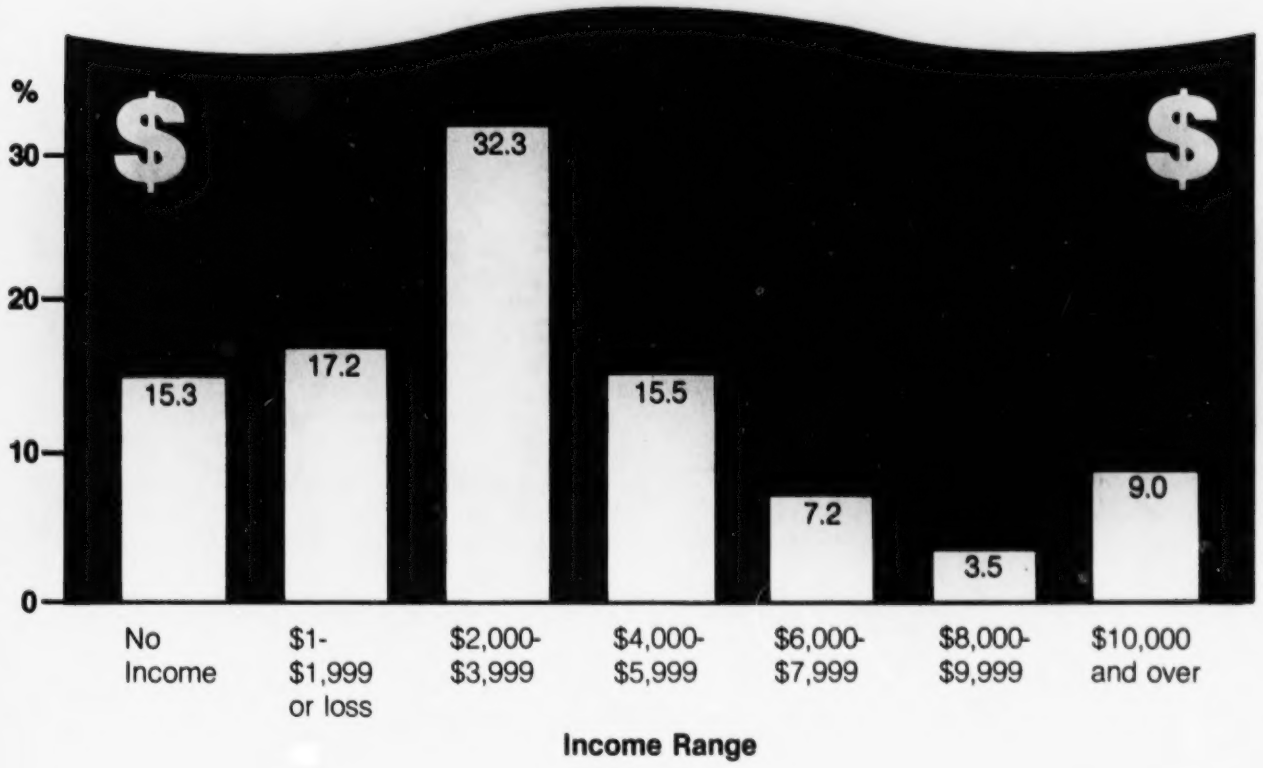
As compared with other disabled individuals, black adults with work disabilities are much less likely to be employed as professional/ technical or managerial/administrative workers and much more likely to work in laborer jobs.

The available data are presented in Table 6.

Proportions are offered, rather than numerical data, because the number of employed disabled black adults of working age sampled by the Census Bureau is insufficiently large for confidence to be placed in the figures derived from successive partitions according to employment, race, disability and occupational-category stati. The extraordinarily high percentage of black disabled women in service jobs, for example, may reflect a statistical artifact.

Figure 5

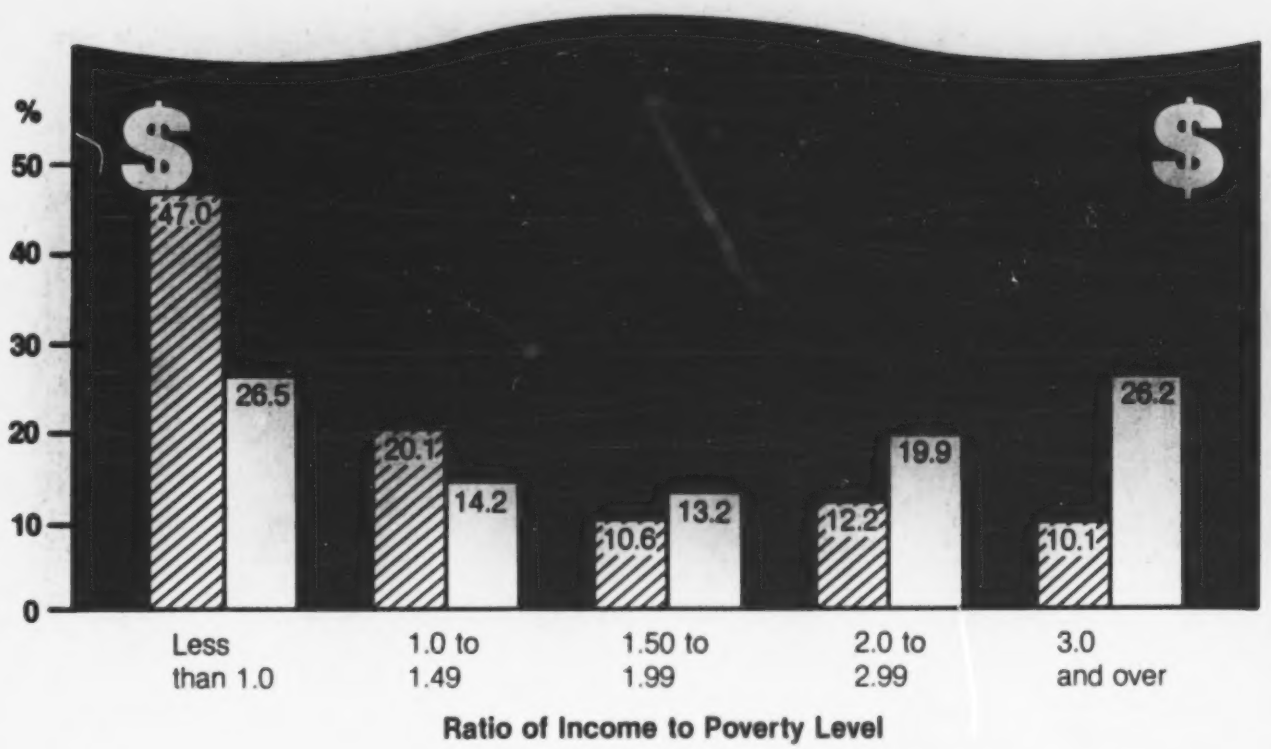
Income in 1980: Black Disabled Adults Aged 16-64 and Not in Institutions



Source: Current Population Survey, March 1981.

Figure 6

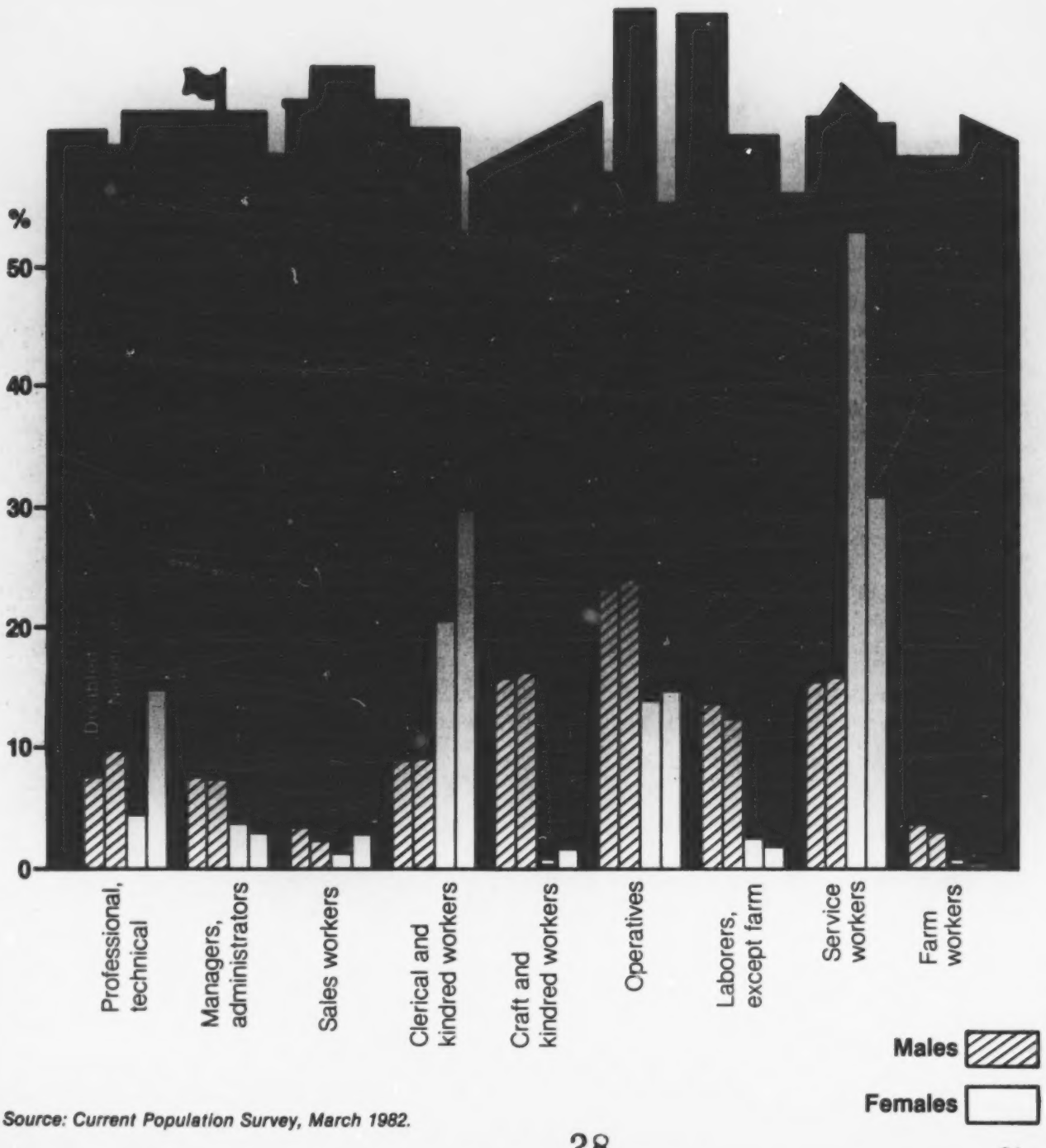
Ratio of Income to Poverty Level, by Disability Status: Black Adults Aged 16-64 and Not in Institutions



Source: Current Population Survey, March 1981.

Table 6

Occupational Category by Disability Status, by Sex: Employed Black Adults Aged 16-64 and Not in Institutions



Source: Current Population Survey, March 1982.

Technical Notes

1. Readers interested in persons under the age of 16 and over the age of 64 may find the following sources of information particularly helpful:

   (1) National Center for Health Statistics, Washington, D.C. 20201. Ask about the most recent annual Health Interview Survey (HIS) report;

   (2) Office of Special Education, USED, Washington, D.C. 20202. Ask about state education agency report compilations for the most recent academic year;

   (3) Rehabilitation Services Administration, USED, Washington, D.C. 20201. Ask about state rehabilitation agency report collations for the most recent year;

   (4) Social Security Administration, USDHHS, Washington, D.C. 20201. Ask about the most recent available data on disability status by age.

2. Data on the March, 1983, and subsequent CPS surveys may be obtained from the Bureau of the Census, USDOC, Washington, D.C. 20233.

3. For a comprehensive statistical report on the 1982 Current Population Survey, see: U.S. Bureau of Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-23, No. 127, *Labor Force Status and Other Characteristics of Persons With a Work Disability: 1982*, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 1983 ($4.50).

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Hacker, A. (Ed.) *U/S: A Statistical Portrait of the American People.* New York: Viking, 1983.

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The President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped
Washington, D.C. 20036